

Message Text

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44

ACTION AF-08

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R 281245Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5385

UNCLAS BUJUMBURA 0358

FOR AF/EX

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1. POST REALIZES ITS RESPONSIBILITY IN DISPOSING OF VEHICLES AND HAS SOLD TWO OF THE FOUR VEHICLES THAT IT WAS SUPPOSED TO SELL AND IS IN THE PROCESS OF SELLING THE 1971 CHEVROLET STAKE TRUCK.

2. THE 1973 JEEP WAGONEER WAS SOLD ON NOVEMBER 3, 1975, AND THE PROCEEDS SENT TO THE DEPARTMENT ON THE SAME DAY.

3. THE 1971 CHEVROLET CARRYALL WAS SOLD ON NOVEMBER 21, 1975, AND NBHE PROCEEDS WERE SENT TO THE DEPARTMENT ON DECEMBER 3, 1975.

4. THE FOLLOWING IS THE ABRIDGED VERSION OF WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING TO EACH VEHICLE IN THE EMBASSY'S MOTOR POOL. THE AMBASSADOR'S 1975 PLYMOUTH FURY - ON A TRIP TO THE INTERIOR THE FURY BLEW ONE OF ITS STEEL RADIAL TIRES. THIS LED TO ALL FRONT END COMPONENTS BECOMING COMPLETELY OUT OF LINE. THE FURY WAS OFF THE ROAD IN NOVEMBER WHILE WE SEARCHED FOR SOMEONE IN TOWN POSSESSING THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT TO ADJUST THE FRONT END. NO ONE WAS FOUND AND THE PLYMOUTH CONTINUES TO HAVE THE JITTERS WHEN IT EXCEEDS 30 MILES PER HOUR. AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE FRONT END WENT OUT, THE KEY BLOCK ASSEMBLY IN THE TRUNK FLEW TO PIECES AND THE TUMBLERS AND SPRINGS WERE LOST ON THE ROAD. WE'RE STILL AWAITING REPLACEMENT PARTS WHICH WERE ORDERED IN NOVEMBER. THE PLYMOUTH'S INNER AND OUTER REAR AXLE BEARINGS, PLUS THE PINION INNER AND OUTER BEARINGS ARE COMPLETELY WORN OUT AND IT HAS BEEN DEADLINED FOR THE PAST TWO WEEKS AWAITING AN URGENT REQUEST FOR PARTS FROM D AND M. THE DEADLINED PLYMOUTH HAS LESS THAN 15,000 MILES. OUR 1975

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JEEP WAGONEER - ONE MONTH AFTER ITS ARRIVAL IN AUGUST, ITS

ELECTRONIC SENDING UNIT BROKE DOWN DUE TO ROAD VIBRATIONS. THE JEEP WAS DEADLINED FOR FOUR WEEKS AWAITING A NEW SENDING UNIT FROM D AND M. AFTER IT WAS REPAIRED, IT MANAGED TO SURVIVE FOR ANOTHER THREE MONTHS BEFORE ITS CLUTCH, PRESSURE PLATE AND TC WORE OUT

BEARINGS GAVE UP THE GHOST. THE JEEP WAS THEN OUT OF COMMISSION FROM MID FEBRUARY UNTIL THE END OF MARCH WHEN REPLACEMENT PARTS FINALLY ARRIVED FROM D AND M. AT PRESENT THE SHEET METAL ON THE JEEP IS BEGINNING TO RIP APART AS ITS BODY CANNOT WITHSTAND THE STRESS OF BURUNDI ROADS. ALSO ALL THE BRACKETS WHICH HOLD THE GAS TANK AND MUFFLER TO THE UNDERCARRIAGE OF THE WAGONEER ARE EITHER BROKEN OR ARE BEGINNING TO BREAK. THE MUFFLER HAS HAD TO BE WELDED BACK TOGETHER TWICE. THE BRACKETS WHICH HOLD THE TAILGATE IN THE OPEN POSITION ARE TOO WEAK AND THE REAR TAIL GATE WINDOW CONTROLS ARE NO LONGER OPERABLE AS THEY HAVE BROKEN UNDER THE STRESS. THIS VEHICLE HAS LESS THAN 3,000 MILES. OUR 1975 CHEVROLET PICK UP - IMMEDIATELY AFTER ITS ARRIVAL AND WITH LESS THAN 1,000 MILES ON THE SPEEDOMETER, THE RIGHT FRONT COIL OF THE PICK UP SNAPPED. THEREAFTER THE WELDS THAT HOLD THE INNER AND OUTER BODY OF THE TRUCK BEGAN TO BREAK. WITH LESS THAN 3,000 MILES, THE FORWARD CLUTCHES IN THE TURBO HYDRAUMATIC TRANSMISSION BECAME COMPLETELY BURNT OUT. CONSEQUENTLY THE PICK UP WAS DEADLINED ALL OF THE MONTH OF MARCH AND PART OF THE MONTH OF APRIL UNTIL THE NEW TRANSMISSION ARRIVED AND WE, TRUSTING IN BLIND LUCK BECAUSE WE HAD NO TRANSMISSION CATALOGUE, PUT IT TOGETHER AGAIN. OUR 1973 CHEVROLET CHEVELLE - AFTER THE BREAK-DOWN OF THE AMBASSADOR'S PLYMOUTH, THE CHEVELLE BECAME HIS OFFICIAL VEHICLE. IT IS PRESENTLY DEADLINED DUE TO THE MALFUNCTIONING OF THE ALTERNATOR. WE ARE AWAITING A NEW ALTERNATOR FROM THE STATES AS NO SUCH PART IS AVAILABLE HERE. ALL OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED VEHICLES GO THROUGH ONE SET OF SHOCKS EVERY TWO MONTHS. OTHERWISE THE RUBBER GROMMETS, UPPER AND LOWER WOULD BECOME COMPLETELY WORN OUT. ALSO DUE TO THE WEIGHT AND ROAD CLEARANCE OF THE PLYMOUTH AND CHEVELLE, THERE ARE REPEATED INSTANCES OF SMASHED BELL HOUSINGS AND RIPPED OUT TRANSMISSION MOUNTS. THE ONLY AMERICAN-MADE VEHICLE WHICH SO FAR SEEMS TO BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND AFRICAN ROAD CONDITIONS IS OUR FIVE TON CHEVROLET TRUCK.

5. DUE TO OUR NUMEROUS VEHICLE BREAKDOWNS, THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN FORCED TO RETAIN TWO OF THE VEHICLES DUE FOR DISPOSAL IN ORDER TO UNCLASSIFIED

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CONTINUE ITS NORMAL OPERATION. THE 1971 CHEVROLET TRUCK HAS BEEN BEING USED AS A BACK UP FOR THE CHEVROLET PICK UP AND THE CAPRICE HAS BEEN BEING RENTED BY STATE EMPLOYEE TRAHAN UNTIL HE IS ABLE TO PURCHASE A NEW CAR AND ALSO AS A BACK-UP FOR THE PLYMOUTH FURY AND 1973 CHEVROLET CHEVELLE.

6. DESPITE ATTEMPTS BY THE ADMIN OFFICER TO TRAIN EMBASSY CHAUFFEURS TO DRIVE MORE CAUTIOUSLY AND SLOWLY, EMBASSY VEHICLES

CONTINUE TO BREAK DOWN.

7. IT HAS BECOME EVIDENT THAT AMERICAN-MANUFACTURED CARS ARE NOT SUITED FOR AFRICAN ROADS. THERE IS ALSO A COMPLETE LACK OF SPARE PARTS IN BURUNDI FOR AMERICAN CARS AND WE CANNOT AT THE MOMENT PROVIDE AN ACCURATE ESTIMATE AS TO HOW MUCH IT HAS COST TO PURCHASE AND HAVE AIRFREIGHTED REPLACEMENT PARTS AS DEPARTMENT HAS THESE FIGURES. HOWEVER WE WOULD GUESS THAT THE FIGURE IS ABOVE DOLLARS 5,000 A YEAR. EMBASSY THEREFORE REQUESTS THAT, WHEN THE TIME COMES, IT BE ALLOWED TO PURCHASE LOCALLY TWO VW COMBI'S TO REPLACE OUR JEEP WAGONEER AND CHEVROLET PICK UP. IF POSSIBLE, IT WOULD ALSO BE PREFERABLE TO REPLACE THE VEHICLES OF THE AMBASSADOR AND DCM WITH EITHER A PEUGEOT OR MERCEDES BENZ. ALL OF THESE CARS CAN BE EASILY SERVICED IN BUJUMBURA WHERE PARTS ARE READILY AVAILABLE.

8. THE VW COMBI'S, IF BOUGHT LOCALLY, WOULD COST APPROXIMATELY DOLS 6,250. THIS IS PRACTICALLY THE SAME PRICE AS A JEEP WAGONEER AND, AT THE SAME TIME, IT WOULD BE SAVING THE GOVERNMENT DOLS 2,000 IN TRANSPORT COSTS.

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